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Project Safe Neighborhoods:

**BRIDGEPORT MAN SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS ON FEDERAL
NARCOTICS CONVICTION**

Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that CARLOS CRUZ, age 34, of 94 Elmwood Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Mark R. Kravitz in New Haven to 60 months of incarceration, followed by five of supervised released, on his conviction for possession of more than 500 grams of cocaine with the intent to distribute. Judge Kravitz also ordered CRUZ to pay a fine in the amount of \$5000. CRUZ pleaded guilty to the charge on November 2, 2004.

According to documents filed with the Court and to statements made in court, on March 27, 2004, CRUZ was arrested by members of the Bridgeport Police Department's Tactical Narcotics Team after being found in possession of a large quantity of cocaine. CRUZ admitted under oath at the time of the guilty plea that he had stored more than 450 grams of cocaine at his parents' variety store, the *MLC Market* located at 1377 Stratford Avenue in Bridgeport. He also admitted to having possessed two different baggies, each containing approximately 60 grams of cocaine, on his person and in his 2002 Chevrolet Avalanche.

CRUZ has also admitted that, prior to his arrest, he had been involved in the unlawful sale of cocaine for at least 10 years. In that time, he had accumulated a large amount of wealth, both in cash and luxury goods, all of which was forfeited by him as part of his conviction in this case. Specifically, CRUZ agreed to forfeit the following items, that were either used to facilitate, or were proceeds of, his drug dealing activity:

five handguns, three luxury cars (a 2002 Chevrolet Avalanche, a 2003 Infinity G35 Coupe, and a 2003 BMW 745i) with a collective value of \$145,000, more than \$130,000 in cash found in his 94 Elmwood Avenue residence, \$7900 worth of car tires and chrome wheels, and more than \$8,000 in assorted jewelry.

CRUZ has been ordered to surrender to the federal prison where he is to be detained on April 28, 2005. He has been released on a \$250,000 bond, secured by three pieces of real property, and accompanied by mandatory electronic monitoring since the date of his federal arrest.

“As part of our Project Safe Neighborhood’s initiative in Bridgeport, this office is committed to prosecuting drug traffickers who possess firearms,” U.S. Attorney O’Connor stated. “Now, this drug dealer’s cash, jewelry, cars and guns will be forfeited to law enforcement, which will help pay for additional resources for enhanced investigation and prosecution of narcotics trafficking activities.”

Indeed, at the conclusion of sentencing, Judge Kravitz warned CRUZ, who previously had a gun permit and no felony convictions, that, since he now was a convicted felon and was prohibited from possessing firearms or ammunition, he would now face significant federal penalties if he was ever caught possessing such weapons.

This case was investigated by members of the Bridgeport Police Department’s Tactical Narcotics Team, who worked together with the Bridgeport DEA office, the Bridgeport State’s Attorney’s Office and the Project Safe Neighborhoods ATF Task Force. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert M. Spector.

The Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative is aimed at reducing gun violence, deterring illegal possession of guns, and improving the safety of residents in Bridgeport and all of Connecticut’s cities. Participants in the initiative include community members and organizations as well as federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. More information on the nationwide Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative can be found at www.psn.gov <<http://www.psn.gov>>.

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